DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 172 545 FL 010 344

AUTHOR Lewin-Poole, Sonia; And Others
TITLE So Who Wants Bilingual Teachers?
PUB DATE Dec 77
NOTE 9p.
JOURNAL CIT Australian Review of Applied Linguistics; v1 n1 p2-9 Dec 1977

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Bilingual Education; *Bilingual Teachers; College Role; *Educational Policy; Higher Education; *Language Attitudes; Language of Instruction; Political Influences; State Departments of Education; *Teacher Education; Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

Difficulties involved in staffing bilingual education programs in Australia are discussed. Bilingual teachers are defined as speakers of English and a community language that is the mother tongue of a sizeable non-English speaking group. Viewpoints are based on an attempt to implement a small-scale teacher training program at La Trobe University. The experience was limited to post-primary teacher trainees destined mostly to work in state schools in Victoria. It is suggested that teacher training institutions do not want to train bilingual teachers. There are few people in Australia who have a command of both English and another language, such that they feel competent to teach in either language. Teacher training institutions are not interested in making a commitment to undertake the teaching of community languages. At La Trobe University, an effort was made to teach people with tertiary qualifications from non-English speaking countries. The Victoria Education Department does not have a policy on bilingual teachers. The existing machinery, together with the present economic and political climate, leaves bilingual teachers with little or no means of being placed in schools. Possible roles of bilingual teachers and problems they would face are outlined, and needs of bilingual student teachers are discussed. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
D. E. Ingram
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SO WHO WANTS BILINGUAL TEACHERS?

Sonia Lewin-Poole, Helen Moore, Keith Simkin
La Trobe University

ED172545

INTRODUCTION

The rationale for bilingual education in Australia is basically a statement that everyone has the right to maintain his mother tongue, a statement which often entails a discussion of the disadvantage suffered by non-English speaking children in an education system which recognizes English as the only valid (and in Victoria, lawful) medium of instruction.

Those who have accepted the ideas behind bilingual education see their task now as one of putting these ideas into practice. However, if bilingual education programs are to be established in Australia (never mind whether or not they are to be successful), a supply of teachers, presumably bilinguals, is needed. In this paper, we wish to present some of the problems involved in getting bilingual teachers into schools. By bilingual teachers in this context, we mean speakers of English and a community language, that is, a language which is the mother tongue of a sizeable non-English speaking group in the Australian community. We feel that discussions about bilingual education rarely face up to the problems involved in staffing such programs. Of course, bilingual teachers can be employed to do things other than implement bilingal programs; indeed, we will suggest that their chances of being involved in a bilingual education program are remote. However, in order to get to first base, as it were, bilingual education presupposes a supply of bilingual teachers and it is on this aspect we wish to concentrate. Our paper is, therefore, not strictly on a linguistic topic but rather is concerned with the *context* in which linguistics and language learning get done. We feel that naivety about this context can ensure that good theories and imaginative programs are never put into practice, and, what is probably worse, naivety about the context in which bilingual programs are mounted has caused them to fail and to be discredited.

Our paper is based on what, at the moment, can only be described as an anecdotal account. Our experience derives from an attempt this year to mount a small-scale teacher training program at La Trobe University. Our experience is limited to post-primary teacher trainees destined mostly to work in State schools in Victoria. (Our discussion does not include aboriginal teachers or teachers of adults.) Many people would argue (rightly in our opinion) that to start in the post-primary area is to tackle the most difficult situation and to give ourselves the least chance of success. The wider context already mentioned has precluded our options on this question, and we feel that, although our experience is limited, the difficulties we have encountered are illustrative of general problems in placing bilingual teachers in schools.

Without trying too hard, one can list eight groups of people who are vital in the process of placing bilingual teachers in schools. These groups are:

1. teacher training institutions
2. the Education Department
3. school staffs

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF

4. school students
5. parents
6. the community
7. potential bilingual teachers
8. bilingual student teachers

Time precludes discussion of more than three of these groups, and so this paper will be devoted to an examination of two institutional groups, namely teacher training institutions and the Department, and to our own bilingual students on course. We hope, at a later date, to give some consideration to the other groups listed.

1. TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

On the whole, it is quite clear that teacher training institutions do not want to train bilingual teachers. The reasons for this lie in the sources of potential bilingual teachers in Australia. Leaving aside the vexed question of what constitutes a balanced bilingual, it is obvious that there are few people in Australia who have a command of both English and another language, such that they feel competent to teach in *either* language. Thus, there is not a "ready made" supply of bilinguals who simply have to be turned into teachers. The main supply of bilingual teachers, as we see it, must come from two groups: firstly, *fluent speakers of a language other than English* who have come here from overseas having completed their secondary and tertiary education in non-English speaking educational institutions (i.e. people who have migrated here as adults), and, secondly, *fluent English speakers* who have been largely educated in this country but whose mother tongue is not English - they may speak their other language in the home and possibly the local community (i.e. people born here or who migrated here as children).

To deal briefly with the latter group first. These people are in the Catch 22 situation that bilingual education is itself aimed to remedy, i.e. they are almost certainly people who have *not* developed their capability in their mother tongue to the point where they would be regarded as educated and fluent speakers. This is because of the present lack of opportunities for the use and learning of community languages in Australian schools and universities, and the consequent attitudinal pressures that lead bilingual children to become ashamed of their bilingualism and to do their best to minimize their use of their mother tongue.

Thus, if teacher-training institutions want to tap this source of bilingual teachers, they will, in the near future at least, have *themselves* to undertake the teaching of community languages, and pretty intensive teaching at that. Most institutions, and especially universities which only operate one year Dip.Ed. pre-service training, are not interested in making this type of commitment, which they see as well beyond their brief in teacher education. University training institutions would argue that the proper place for language learning is during a student's degree studies. However, as we have already indicated, the opportunities for degree studies in the major community languages is limited. As far as we know, Italian is taught in 7 universities, Greek in 3, Spanish in 4; and, for example, Turkish, Arabic, Serbo-Croatian are not taught at all. Adelaide College of Advanced Education is a notable exception to the statement that teacher training institutions do not see fit to teach languages to teachers. Roman Rubichi's paper at ANZAAS describes a project which involves the teaching of Italian as part of teacher education.

At La Trobe, a small group of us decided to involve ourselves with the former type of potential bilingual teacher, namely, people with tertiary qualifications from non-English speaking countries. The first problem associated with this group is the recognition of their qualifications. For a person to be admitted to a University Diploma in Education, a degree qualification is necessary. There are fairly well established procedures for the assessment of degree qualifications from countries which have sent large numbers of migrants, for example, Greece and Italy, but it appears to us that smaller groups are treated in a fairly summary and arbitrary way (e.g. people from India, Philippines and mainland China). Further, if people wish to teach in the State system, their qualifications must be recognized independently by the Teacher Registration Board, whose recognition is in no way automatic.

Admitting people with recognized degree qualifications from non-English speaking countries also requires a substantial commitment on the part of the training institution. Such people are liable to be less than proficient in English and to be unfamiliar with the philosophy underlying the methodology and organization of Australian schools. Most teacher training institutions play safe and summarily throw out applications from those with overseas qualifications. A non-discriminatory policy would entail, at the very least, interviewing such applicants, which teacher training institutions generally do not do. A commitment to bilingual teachers necessitated, in our case, testing, interviewing and providing substantial English tuition (i.e. six hours per week for the whole year) for a group of ten applicants whose English was judged to be capable of upgrading to a level where they could teach in English by the end of the year.

Provision of English language teaching is the tip of the iceberg in respect to the commitment of manpower resources by the training institutions. Bridging the gap between, on the one hand, the educational experience and expectations of the bilingual and, on the other hand, what he/she is likely to meet in schools is a mammoth task, demanding special planning in terms of coursework and a vast amount of careful attention and close contact in teaching practice.

At a time when tertiary institutions are cutting back on staffing, those who count student heads and calculate contact hours are not particularly sympathetic to a group of students who demand at least double the amount of time per head compared with other students. Institutions attempting to economize by simply slotting such students into existing programs find, very naturally, that the students can't cope and don't seem to gain much from the course. The institution faces a loss of credibility if the bilingual student is failed at the end of the year, or if their students are released to schools which they are manifestly ill-equipped to cope with. The conclusion can only be that, in their own best interests, teacher training institutions are well advised to steer clear of bilingual teachers.

2. *THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT* (in this case, the Victorian Education Department)

The Education Department is the most likely employer of bilingual teachers although the Catholic school system may be interested in recruiting from some ethnic groups. Despite its image as a monolithic bureaucratic machine, the Victorian Education Department is very fragmented, at least as far as the migrant education area is concerned.

The appointment of bilingual teachers where they could be most useful is difficult, for several reasons. There are three separate divisions within the Education Department, each with its own separate machinery for recruitment and posting. The staffing officers cannot send bilinguals where they are needed, because schools are staffed according to the requests made by the Principal of each school, and many principals have other priorities. In addition, the staffing officers don't necessarily know where there are heavy concentrations of particular ethnic groups, although, if they care to, they can find out from the Child Migrant Education Branch.

In any case, the Department does not have a policy on bilingual teachers. If one examines the role a bilingual teacher can play within a school, it becomes clear that existing machinery, together with the present economic and political climate, leaves bilingual teachers with little or no means of being placed in schools. One can ask the question - what can a bilingual teacher do? - and one comes up with a set of roles with the political and economic cards stacked against them:

A bilingual teacher could:

ROLE	*PROBLEM*
1. Teach in a bilingual education program.	1. Few bilingual programs exist in Victorian schools, probably none in secondary schools. That they are hardly top priority can be seen from a recent statement made on television by Dr. Shears, the Director-General of Education, to the effect that teaching migrant children in their first language would be to do them a disservice unless these children planned to return to their own countries in one or two years. In any case it would be unlikely and unfair to expect that a first year out teacher should be recruited to set up a new and experimental program in a school.
2. Teach on the Modern Languages staff.	Here again, we are met with the problem that existing *structures* rather than *needs* determine priorities. In Victorian schools in 1977, there are 54 schools teaching Italian and thus there is a reasonable chance that Italian teachers can be employed. There is an outside chance for Greek (19 schools) and almost no chance for Spanish or Turkish (7 and 3 schools respectively); there is no call whatsoever for Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese - to mention only the languages represented on our course at present.(1) Principals, confined to working within strict ceilings, are unlikely to prefer the *setting up* of a Turkish program to *replacing* a staff member leaving the Maths, Science or English Departments, which is the

sort of choice principals at present have to face. Again, it would seem a recipe for disaster to invite a first year out teacher to set up a new department. Further, Departmental policy is that, in order for a person to teach a subject, the subject must have been studied at university. Thus native speakers are not qualified to teach their own language unless they have studied that language at tertiary level. The subjects our students are, therefore, qualified to teach are, to cite a few, History, Economics, Agriculture, Theology, Biology and Business Studies.

3. **Teach in *multicultural* education programs.**

Here the problem is simple: there is a glut of Social Studies teachers in Victoria and the Department has told us that it is unlikely to employ any in 1978 or the foreseeable future.

4. **Teach the subjects his/her degree qualifies him/her to teach.**

In this case the bilingual teacher can be competing on the open market with native English speakers. Linguistic tolerance is not such in this country, especially among those whose decisions as to employment count (namely the Education Department and Principals), that non-native speakers of English, who may be fluent but nevertheless prone to errors in pronunciation and syntax, can easily compete with native speakers who wish to teach Maths, Science, Economics etc. In any case, putting the bilingual teacher in this position is ignoring what he most obviously has to offer. The case can be made (and we are in the process of making it) that bilingual teachers should be placed in schools where there are sizeable populations of their own ethnic group. Here they would teach the subjects they are qualified in. This seems at present to be the only viable option, but we are conscious that it is fraught with problems. Not least of these would be the workload that will be attached to the welfare and translating work to be done for children and parents of the teacher's ethnic groups, *together* with a full allotment in two subjects (for example, Maths and Science) to be taught in English as the teachers' second language.

A fifth possibility exists, namely, for a new category "bilingual teacher" to be created. Although initially attractive, this is an invitation for the creation of a group of second class citizens within the Departmental structures, teachers with no particular role or status and with no channels for promotion. This situation has happened with Migrant English teachers and has had a demoralizing effect on these teachers and, in many cases, has restricted the influence they could bring to bear in a school.

It is clear then, that the existence of bilingual teachers (not to mention bilingual pupils) is a problem for the Department of Education. In both cases, the solution has been to force conformity to existing structures. The result is that, on the one hand, the realities of the situation are not confronted and, on the other, the existence of bilingual teachers (and pupils) remains at the level of a problem, rather than a valuable asset which the nation is failing to utilize.

3. *BILINGUAL STUDENT TEACHERS*

In general, the members of our bilingual teacher training course have not found it easy to adopt a positive role as bilingual teachers in their practice teaching rounds; their expectation of the roles they will play next year is confused, and, given the sorts of options we have already outlined, there is nothing to wonder about in their confusion. The picture is further complicated when we pose the question: what do our teacher trainees want for themselves? do they, in fact, want to be bilingual teachers?

Our analysis of what our students might want is, of course, structured by what we, the course designers and teachers, want for these students. In a recent letter we wrote to the Victorian Minister for Education, Mr. Thompson, we defined our aims as follows:

> *In order to graduate from the course, students will have to demonstrate their capacity to teach in both their own language and English, using the methodologies and techniques that are generally acceptable to children, colleagues and parents of their own and other ethnic (including Anglo-Australian) backgrounds. Beyond this, we hope to produce teachers who can act as genuine "bridges" between their own and other cultures and who will be able to contribute fully to the schools in which they work. We reject the notion of ethnic teachers who can operate only in their own language and whose participation in the life of the school is restricted by a lack of facility in English and a lack of understanding of the diversity that exists in Australian schools. On the other hand, we see bilingual teachers as having a unique and valuable contribution to make to schools which contain children from their own ethnic background, in that they will be able to liaise between these children, other staff members, and parents, as well as stimulating changes which will enable curricula to meet the needs and aspirations of all ethnic groups within the school.*

What we are demanding, therefore, is a truly bicultural teacher, someone who can "take the best from both cultures". This might be to demand the impossible, and, certainly, we would be the first to admit that we don't really know what such a phrase means; nor, we suspect, do our students. Some have told us that they have no particular commitment to bilingualism in schools or to children who share their mother tongue and culture, although (and this has been said quite openly) if a willingness to work in this area will secure a respectable job with a reasonable income, then they're prepared to play along - it's better than working in the Ford factory.

In fact, of course, working in the Ford factory might be much less hassle (and not much less money). The demands that have been placed on our students have been considerable. Their responses to these demands are one indication as to whether or not they themselves want to be bilingual teachers in the way we, the course designers, envisage it. Their responses to the pressures they are faced with can be typified as follows:

1. The student strongly asserts that the education system in which he himself grew up is the only valid system. Translated into teaching methodology, this appears to entail a rigidly authoritarian approach, with the lecture as the main (or only) mode of teaching. Discussion is never sought and usually stopped; questions test the pupil's ability to retain facts and are never designed to seek opinion or set a train of reasoning in motion. Further, the student teacher resists persuasion that this is a bad way to teach children (most Anglo-Saxons pay lip service to other methods, even if their practice is similar to what I've outlined above). In his attitudes to children, this type of student teacher is élitist: he will openly refer to children from his own ethnic group as "only peasants". (We have heard the phrase "peasant trash" uttered in our seminars.) The bilingual's attitude to language is part and parcel of this same élitism: the children's non-standard forms of their mother tongue are belittled, and, in language classes, learning the standard form is made a difficult and highly academic exercise, couched in value judgements that serve to undermine rather than build on the children's pride in their everyday manifestations of their cultural heritage and ways of speaking. An example of how destructive this can be is the following observation made by some Greek children:

   We are so pleased that we are going to study Greek. Here was one thing we actually knew! But we found out we didn't know Greek either.

   We, the course tutors, assess this type of response as a failure to meet the demands that exist in Australian schools - in this respect we might be accused of being assimilationist and paternalistic, since we are rejecting a way of teaching that is favoured by at least some people in various ethnic communities. Nevertheless, we have come to the conclusion that this type of teaching style (and the philosophy that goes with it) provokes migrant children, who are already under peer group and other pressures to reject their language and culture, to a total rejection. A teacher who follows this type of behaviour is doomed to alienation from both pupils and colleagues.

2. A second type of response to the pressures of being a bilingual teacher is a modified version of our first characterisation: however, this type of behaviour does not lead to rejection by children or alienation from colleagues and, although it is far from our aims, it will not entail the student's failing the course. The student teacher realizes that, in essence, Australian schools are not much different to those he grew up in, although the outward signs are misleading. In Australian schools, the crucial test in the teaching profession is that revered ability to get on top of the pupils and control the class. In the Australian context, good, commanding English is important. So too is acceptability to the students. Under these pressures, the bilingual teacher tends to model himself on the Australian teachers who have good classroom control; he plays down any culturally different characteristics which might potentially alienate him from the class. It is tempting to argue that this type

of bilingual teacher has modelled himself on a group that generally doesn't support bilingualism. In any case, it can be observed that some of our bilingual students have few ties with those who speak their mother tongue in Melbourne and are heavily committed to the primacy of English language acquisition for their own children.

One or two of our students appear to be genuinely attempting to work as bilingual, bicultural teachers, in the sense that they do not want to reject either of the languages and cultures they have access to. These students tell us of the enormous stress they are under: although *they* do not want to reject either of their languages and cultures, they are afraid that they themselves have been rejected - they feel that they are not really accepted by Anglo-Australians (much less by other ethnic groups) and yet they have given up too many of their mother culture's ways and beliefs to be regarded as " safe" by other members of their original ethnic group. This feeling of being in a kind of cultural "no mans land" is what I understand to be one meaning of Durkheim's term *anomie* as used by Lambert,(2) [1967], and it is, apparently, a common phenomenon in bilingualism. We hope our students will be able to work through these problems - if they come to terms with themselves, they will be able to tell us what it is "to choose the best from both cultures" and they will, we hope, be able to help the children in their care to attain the same state of grace. However, it is clear that, for those few who do want to become bilingual teachers in the fullest sense of the term, the way is hard and the gate is narrow.

CONCLUSION

We conclude that the need for bilingual teachers is great, but, when one begins to look at the groups of people integral to the process of placing bilingual teachers in schools, one finds good reasons why they might want to opt out. But it is not simply a coincidence that a variety of factors are at work to prevent bilingualism from being effectively utilized in our schools. In every modern society, methods of social control have been developed, ostensibly to prevent social disintegration and minimize racial conflict but, in reality, the purpose is to preserve as much power and status as possible for already established political, social and economic elites. Education is supposed to play an important part in this process of socializing minorities and exacting compliance with the standards of the major culture. Placing genuinely bilingual and bicultural teachers in schools is one tiny step towards the shifting of power from one group in society towards another different group. Such a process is threatening to those who hold power (including ourselves) and is difficult and disruptive. Those who want to change the system (even if only to a minute degree) have to expect to be thwarted at nearly every turn.

NOTES

(1) Based on figures supplied by the Child Migrant Education Branch.

(2) Lambert, W.E., (1967) "A Social Psychology of Bilingualism", in Pride, J.B. , & Holmes, J., *Sociolinguistics*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p.345.